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STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 33-55

SUBJECT: Communism Reappraised in the Light of Recent Soviet Behavior*

"An obliging bear is more dangerous than an enemy."

Old Russian proverb quoted by Lenin in his
"Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder"

The Problem: Communist Mutation?

1. In trying to estimate the meaning for international Communism of recent Soviet policies, especially the explicit acceptance of Yugoslavia's "rightist deviationism", the question once again arises whether this new Soviet approach signifies more than a tactical change. Has there occurred a Communist mutation? Is the USSR no longer an ideological center, but a national state in the sense that it would limit its aspirations to physical security of its present boundaries and economic expansion? Or is the Soviet state still primarily the base of world Communism?

The Meaning of Ideology in the USSR

2. In order to answer these questions, crucial for long-range estimation, the significance of the role of ideology in a "socialist" state must first be considered. For, if we assume that Communist doctrine is merely window dressing used by the Soviet leaders to rationalize Russian power politics, there would be no need for a re-appraisal of the impact of Communist doctrine on Soviet policy. As a result of years of study and interrogations,

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came to the conclusion that "enormous stress is put on ideology both as a doctrine and as a practical instrument" and that "the operating ideology of the Soviet leadership at any given point in time is kept remarkably consistent."

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"the ruling elite takes ideology, and indeed, philosophy, seriously to a degree that is difficult for a mid-twentieth century Westerner to comprehend. While the Soviet leaders manipulate ideology, they are also manipulated by it." Rostow, in his "Dynamics of Soviet Society", emphasizes that "the Soviet leaders were trained in a Marxist vocabulary; they think, talk, especially about the world abroad, in terms of economic interests, class groups, and class struggles... It is very doubtful, therefore, that they understand the ethical foundation of Western societies or the concept of politics as the arena for the

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settlement of differences among individuals and groups." He concludes that "men do tend to be taken in by their own magic, and part of their magic consists in the concepts they use to describe and interpret the world around them. In this scene, it is likely that Marxist ideology is still alive and vital in the higher reaches of the Soviet regime."

3. Leninist tactics have always served as a convenient smoke screen behind which the true intentions of Communists could be hidden. With "ebbs and flows" of Communist fortunes occurring repeatedly throughout decades, tactical changes--including superficial modifications of the dogma--have generally confused people or diverted their attention from Communist realities. But changes of the dogma were concerned chiefly with the "superstructure" of state and society; the basic structure of Marxism and Leninism has remained sacrosanct. However, this does not exclude such re-interpretations as are considered necessary for adjustments to new world conditions. Moreover, immobility would deny the validity of the dialectical process, as it is applied by Marxists, to the interpretation of history and the forecasting of future developments. Since Marxian dialectics essentially connotes a permanent struggle between old and new social forces and ideas, fought for the achievement of a new "synthesis", so the practical application of the doctrine allows for a great variety of approaches. There are no indications either inside the Bloc or outside among the Communist Parties that this basic concept has changed.

Present Party Position on Doctrine

4. On the contrary, there is new evidence that even now efforts are being made in the USSR to tighten doctrinal attitudes and sharpen organizational weapons within the Marxist-Leninist framework. In this connection, the issues No. 6 of KOMMUNIST and No. 7 of PARTY LIFE, official party organs, published at the occasion of Lenin's birthday anniversary, are most revealing. KOMMUNIST upbraided "right deviationists" in Hungary and Communist China who "belittled the leading role of the working class and of the Party in the government, and who were aiming at squeezing the Party out of the leadership of the country." Both periodicals abound with references to Lenin's emphasis on the "necessity for a merciless struggle" against distorters of Marxism. The "revolutionary" character of Marxism, presented at times in almost violent Zhdanovist terms, and actual references to Zhdanov, is stressed in sentences such as the following one in PARTY LIFE:

"The idea of internationalism is an inseparable, integral part of Marxist-Leninist doctrine concerning the world-wide historic mission of the proletariat which is called on, in union with all workers, to carry out by revolutionary means the exchange of the old capitalist system, which is outliving its day, for a Communist system."

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KOMMUNIST actually returns to the 1946/48 formula by recalling that the leaders of the Communist Parties of France, Italy and other countries made statements to the effect that "the people of these countries will never allow themselves to be dragged into an imperialist war against the camp of socialism but, on the other hand, will do everything they can to support and strengthen friendly ties with the peoples of the USSR and other socialist states."

PARTY LIFE, by implication, disagrees with the formula which allowed "local particularities" of satellites and appears to renege on the recognition of Yugoslavia's approach to Communism: "The countries of popular democracy... have their own national, historic, economic peculiarities and traditions.... But they all are going by one path in the building of socialism, the path laid out by Marxism and Leninism and traversed by the Soviet Union. And this path... is the only true path." This interpretation of the doctrine is implemented by Communist propaganda media and continued emphasis on anti-American themes. Even while the Soviet leaders are making a show of their friendly disposition and reasonableness, Communist press and radio continue to hew to a tightened Party line which is far from "relaxed" and which shows some signs of a virulent Zhdanovist application of the more aggressive Leninist principles and practices, while on the other hand implicitly repudiating Stalinism.

Soviet Accommodation to Titoism and the Satellites

5. Soviet accommodation to Yugoslav "right deviationism" probably is a tactical measure designed to prevent Yugoslavia from becoming too close to the West and to neutralize this strategically important area. It almost certainly does not connote a basic doctrinal change on the part of the Soviets; rather it represents a temporary adjustment -- essential to the pursuit of broader aims. Tito's regime, at present, is evolutionary rather than revolutionary and while bristling with Marxist lingo, it is a brand of revisionism that both Lenin and Stalin pursued with deadly hatred. An application of the Soviet-Yugoslav formula to the "People's Democracies" is highly unlikely. The USSR almost certainly would not voluntarily relinquish control of its cordon sanitaire. There may be minor concessions to bolster the ego of individual satellites on the ground of their "national peculiarities", but concessions will not be made at the risk of seriously injuring Soviet control in the Satellite area. Nor is it likely that the Satellite peoples will remain long under the illusion that the Khrushchev-Tito agreement holds much of a promise for them. Even if the Cominform should be dissolved, other organizations can easily take over its functions. The organization created by the Warsaw Treaty, while ostensibly an agreement between "independent" nations, will probably serve two purposes: (a) to make it appear that Soviet control in Eastern Europe is loosened and freedom of action for individual satellites restored, and (b) to establish, in fact, an organization which can centrally control the political, economic, and military aspects in the Satellites.

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Repercussions in the International Communist Movement

6. The Communist Parties outside the Sino-Soviet Bloc are in the process of adapting themselves to the new Moscow approach. If they could do so after the Nazi-Soviet Pact, they can easily do so now. The French CP, after a period of significant silence, has apparently tightened its grip on its ideological and organizational activities. The CP-controlled CGT, the major French trade union, has turned down internal coexistence with more moderate factions. The Italian CP has taken a more amorphous stand as a result of the Soviet-Yugoslav accord, Vidali's Trieste dissent and, most of all, the split among the leaders and Togliatti's serious illness. But Longo, Togliatti's likely successor, is a hard-line man and will almost certainly restore much of the Party's "good government" which had made the CPI the best Communist organization outside the Bloc. The non-European CPs probably always have had more sympathies for Tito than their continental comrades. In fact, the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement, ostensibly indicating more freedom for national Parties, may well enhance loyalties of Middle Eastern, African and Asian Communists to Moscow, and a dissolution of the Cominform may further help this trend. The international Communist front organizations are trying to implement the Soviet line by re-invigorating and widening "united front" tactics slated to oppose governments which do not uncritically accept the Soviet concept of coexistence.

The Crucial Soviet Dilemma of a Genuine Settlement

7. Nevertheless, in implementing their new approach, the Soviet leaders are facing a crucial dilemma. Stalin's concept of the USSR as the base of world revolution, surrounded by a hostile, encircling capitalist world, has proved an invaluable rationale for justifying internally the maintenance of massive armed forces and security organs, the isolation of the USSR from the capitalist world, and the postponement of improvement in the living standard of the Soviet people. But it has also constituted a limitation on Soviet flexibility in the handling of international affairs, particularly at a time when such flexibility appears necessary from the Soviet point of view. The results of Stalinist rigidity in international relations, the appearance of nuclear weapons and the internal problems in the USSR and the East European area must have awakened the post-Stalin leaders to the fact that such rigidity could eventually lead to general war, and thus jeopardize the gains of the Bolshevik revolution before Communism was strong enough to challenge the non-Communist world. Therefore, the stability of Soviet power -- the base of the International Communist movement -- should be given priority at this time over the spread of Communism elsewhere. But, at the same time the concept of the USSR as the encircled target of capitalist enemies also (and intentionally so) operates to prevent the establishment of genuine peace. The Soviet leaders, as Communists, would find it extremely difficult to accept a basic settlement because the nature of such settlement would alter the foundations upon which

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their rule is built.* In a world without tension, the Marxist goal would dissipate and revolution would stagnate; dialectics would become as useless as the class struggle, and Soviet methods of implementing Communism would become Fabian -- an unthinkable paradox. How the Soviet leaders will attempt to cope with this dilemma, may well furnish us with the clearest indications of their intentions.

Practical Aspects Not Specified by Doctrine

8. It is true that there are practical problems of Soviet policy and behavior which are not expressly covered in the doctrine, thus requiring interpretation by the leading man or group. For example, there is the unsolved question of leadership in the USSR, namely, its form and provisions for succession. There is the problem of the position of the armed forces, the nature of its command and the extent of its political influence. There are questions of economic policy which cannot be determined by specific doctrinal lines. Other such problems include the intricate relationship between the USSR on the one hand, and Communist China and the East European satellites on the other hand. It is difficult, if not impossible, to forecast Soviet approaches to these problems on the basis of specific tenets of the doctrine. They will probably be handled by the Soviet leaders in accordance to what they believe to be prevailing conditions though they might make some reference to the scriptures, if applicable (for example: the functions of Soviet army as the instrument of the Party). In some cases, ideological justifications will undoubtedly be formulated ex post facto. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that while detailed issues of a "superstructural" nature will always be decided opportunistically, the basic body of Communist thought is broad enough for important decisions to be made within the framework of Communist thinking and psychology. There have been voices claiming that a "mellowing process" in Communism is inevitable and that this will eventually lead to a state of genuine coexistence and the end of the cold war. But it seems unlikely that such a mellowing can be expected to take place soon enough to be considered in contemporary planning.

Conclusions

9. The conclusions to be drawn from these considerations are:

a. Soviet-Communist tactics are unlikely to stem from a genuine desire to firmly cement peace and prosperity. In a relatively

* The premises for a "basic settlement" would be the renunciation by the Communist states of (a) ideology as an instrument of international subversion, (b) the objective of eventual world conquest, and (c) the totalitarian form of government as an instrument for the ideological mission. Such a settlement would not mean the arrival of the millenium: it is recognized that conflicts of interest will always exist between national states. It does mean, however, that national policy objectives would be more limited and the finding of a common platform for negotiations would become more feasible.

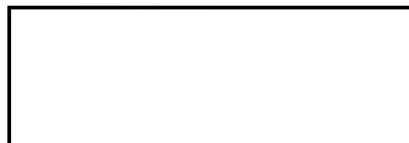
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peaceful world with free communications, international Communism would perforce stagnate, and evolutionary measures for social welfare would demonstrate that Marxism is an antiquated, no longer applicable, doctrine of the 19th century. If Marxism would collapse, Leninism would follow it down to burial in historical archives. Such a prospect is as unacceptable to Soviet leaders as it would be for a believer to deny the existence of God. Thus present concessions connote an effort to find a temporary compromise solution in order to pacify the Free World and to gain time for the consolidation of the "Socialist Camp".

b. Communism has remained an essentially conspiratorial secular religion. Its international organization will almost certainly continue to hew to the Party line and help to advance Moscow's objectives; more peaceful methods in international relations are not a reflection of an ideological change but a purely tactical maneuver on a grand scale; and the US, strongest Western power, will remain the chief target of Communist deception or subversion.

c. There is no evidence that the USSR will permit its ideological framework to be dismantled. It still is the base of international Communism; Communist China, though acting as an independent partner, has recognized Soviet ideological leadership on many occasions. The foundations of Marxism-Leninism apparently remain firmly established but it is possible that greater latitude will be employed in developing new methods to achieve the ultimate objectives of Communism. Whether such new methods can affect the basic ideology in the long run, cannot now be foreseen, but it seems safe to estimate that such changes, if any, will almost certainly not occur within the next decade or two.

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